



Montana WIC Program

A Toolkit for the Promotion of Fresh Fruits and Vegetable

What Incredible Choices

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Introduction: **WHY** promote **MORE** fruits and vegetables?

Why **MORE** fruits and vegetables?

There are many reasons to promote more fruits and vegetables to families enrolled in the Montana WIC program. We could, of course, just focus on the great taste, crunchy flavors, and bright colors of produce.

In fact, the most important reason to promote fruits and vegetables is that they are a deliciously easy way to fill some of American's most serious nutrition gaps. Virtually every health organization in the country from the American Heart Association (AHA) to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends that Americans – adults and children – eat more fruits and vegetables.

Why? Quite simply because, no matter how you look at, Americans of all ages are not consuming enough fruits and vegetables.

- The percentage who are eating enough varies by age group – but it may be as low as 24% of Montana adults and even lower for teenagers.
- Although some studies indicate that almost 50% of 2 to 3-year olds consume recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables, this is often only because they tend to drink lots of fruit juice.
- A closer look at vegetable intake highlights some concerns with the types of produce that kids eat. Over half of all vegetables consumed by children 2 to 3-years old are starchy vegetables (white potatoes, corn, and green peas). The vast majority of these are white potatoes, served mostly as French fries!
- Children's intake of dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, and legumes – the most nutrient-rich vegetable choices – are much lower in all age groups than recommended amounts.

Why do children (and their families) need to eat more apples, broccoli, and carrots, as well as fewer fries and less fruit juice? Quite simply, for better health – as well as normal growth and development.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans identified five shortfall nutrients for children (vitamin E, calcium, fiber, potassium, and magnesium) and seven for adults (same as those for children plus vitamins A and C).

- "Shortfall nutrient" means that we are eating so little of a nutrient that it can have serious consequences for our health today and in the future.
- The most nutrient-rich sources of **vitamins A and C, magnesium, potassium, and fiber** are fruits and vegetables, especially whole, fresh ones.
- Eating plenty of nutrient-rich, low-fat, low-calorie produce helps keep kids and adults healthy – and it may also help promote healthy weights for all ages.
- Meeting fruit and vegetable guidelines may also help all Montanans lower their risk of high blood pressure, certain cancers, and heart disease.

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Why **MORE** fruits and vegetables in WIC?

Montana WIC participants need more fruits and vegetables to fill their nutrient gaps – and to enjoy delicious nutrition morning, noon, and night. There are also a couple of other critical reasons why WIC is such a powerful time to promote more fruits and vegetables.

- During pregnancy, women are often motivated to take better than usual care of their bodies – because they are focused on having a healthy baby. There is no better time to get into a daily fruit and vegetable habit!
- Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers also have a powerful influence over children's lifelong eating habits. When preschool children develop a taste for and positive attitudes toward fresh produce, they are more likely to be fruit and vegetable eaters for life.

Why **MORE** fruits and vegetables in WIC now?

The new WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit provides the perfect opportunity to promote more produce to WIC participants.

- Now, WIC participants can purchase fruits and vegetables as part of their regular food package.
- Now, they not only have the motivation and the information, they also have the means to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables.
- Now, Montana WIC participants can use their Fruit and Vegetable Benefit at authorized grocery stores – and for the freshest possible produce with authorized Farmers at local farmers' markets and farm stands throughout Big Sky country.

This following information highlights the use of fresh fruits and vegetables that can be purchased with the WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit and WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Benefits.

Fruits and vegetables, which are canned or frozen, are a nutritious choice, but not the focus of this project.



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Strategies: **HOW** to promote **MORE** fruits and vegetables?

Fortunately, there are hundreds – if not thousands – of delicious, colorful, fun ways to promote fresh fruits and vegetables in the Montana WIC Program. Whatever the location, size, and space of your office or clinic, you can provide the inspiration and education that WIC participants need to effectively get the most from their WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit.

This section will provide a small “menu” of ideas for your fruit and vegetable promotions; your creativity can undoubtedly provide many more! In the sections that follow, you will learn more about **PEOPLE** who can help in your promotions, some new **TOOLS** to help your efforts, and where to find additional **RESOURCES**.

As with any promotion, use a variety of fruit and vegetable strategies at your site. Some strategies will be effective with one participant, while other individuals will respond to something entirely different. In general, think about ways to include strategies that:

- INSPIRE** ... photos or samples of appealing fruits and vegetables
- EDUCATE** ... information about how to choose, store, and prepare produce
- MODEL** ... examples of how others are enjoying fruits and vegetables
- MOTIVATE** ... tips that make it so easy for families enjoy more produce

Promoting **MORE** fruit and vegetables at WIC visits

Even if you have just a few minutes with a participant – and even if there are children running around the room, you can still promote fruits and vegetables at every visit. Here's how:

- **Start a conversation about fruits and vegetables.**
- **Share a tasty recipe or helpful tip sheet with fruits or vegetables.**
- **Point out the produce information on a bulletin board.**
- **Distract a child with a fruit or vegetable toy or book.**
- **Sing a fruit and vegetable song while you weigh a child.**
- **Entertain a child with a fruit or vegetable finger play.**
- **Reward a child with a fruit or vegetable sticker.**
- **Invite a participant to a class or tour about produce.**
- **Watch a short instructional video online (see website ideas, page 9).**

Promoting **MORE** fruits and vegetables during group events

Any group event on any topic can become a way to promote fresh produce; all you have to do is serve fruits and/or vegetables as refreshments. This can be an especially good way to get participants to explore new items. Be sure to provide information on choosing, storing, and preparing the items that you serve.



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Fruits and vegetables also make delightful topics for small group activities and tours in supermarkets and farmers' markets. Complete instructions for six small group activities – designed just for the Montana WIC Program – are included with this project. Each activity page includes simple instructions for everything you need to do for a successful event. All you need to do is invite participants and staff to join you. Here are the suggested activities:

1. **Shopping Smart:** Getting more value for your WIC fruit and vegetable benefit
2. **Eating More Matters:** How to help children eat more fruits and vegetables
3. **Sneaky Produce Secrets:** Easy ways to slip fruits and vegetables into meals
4. **Born Learning:** Teachable fruit and vegetable moments with children
5. **Mom-to-Mom:** Exchanging recipes and tips for fresh fruits and vegetables
6. **Market Tours:** Supermarket and farmers' market tours

Promoting **MORE** fruits and vegetables in the community

Many other groups and programs are promoting fruits and vegetables these days. You may be able to reach WIC participants by partnering with your local health department, MSU Extension office, Head Start program, supermarket, or farmers' market. You will find some specific ideas on these types of partnerships in the next section.

Your local WIC office might also have the opportunity to promote fresh fruits and vegetables at a community event. Check whether any of these opportunities might be available in your community:

- **A community health fair at the school or health clinic**
- **A children's health fair or other event offered by a local hospital**
- **A school open house, carnival, or parent night**
- **A preschool screening and education event**



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Partners: WHO can help promote MORE fruits and vegetables?

Promoting MORE fruits and vegetables with farmers

This is the perfect way to get to know your farmer. USDA even has a **Know Your Farmer, Know your Food** initiative (www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer). Once you get to know produce farmers in your area, you talk about ways to collaborate on promoting fresh, local fruits and vegetables. Some possibilities might include:

- Arranging a specific time for a taste test or food demonstration (with WIC recipes or tip sheets) for participants at the farmer's booth during regular farmers' market.
- Offering a presentation by a local farmer at the WIC office on picking produce, gardening tips, or any other topic that they might feel comfortable talking about.
- For farmers that open their farm for tours, schedule a time for WIC families to take a tour, especially if there are U-pick opportunities at the same time.

Promoting MORE fruits and vegetables at the grocery store

Getting to know the produce manager at your local grocery store(s) can have similar benefits to getting to know your farmer. Produce managers are usually more than willing to showcase the fresh fruits and vegetables in their bins. Once you get to know them, you can explore opportunities for grocery store tours or other special events.

Some supermarket chains are also giving free tours for children. For example, Albertsons sponsors a store tour program called **Albertsons Healthy Eaters** (<http://albertsonswellbeing.com/take-a-tour-on-the-healthy-side-albertsons-healthy-eaters/>) for children K-4. If you have a local Albertsons, you may be able to arrange a tour for WIC participants and their older children.

Promoting MORE fruits and vegetables at Head Start or child care

Many children in Montana WIC families attend Early Head Start, Head Start, and/or childcare programs affiliated with the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Programs). These programs are also actively promoting fruits and vegetables to children and families.

Put preschool teachers and staff on your get-to-know list in addition to farmers and produce managers. They are well-known for their creativity, resourcefulness, and willingness to share. Depending on the program, they may even have a lending library of materials that the WIC program can use. At the very least, they will be able to teach you some easy songs, finger plays, and games to use with young children.



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Tools: WHAT to use in promoting MORE fruits and vegetables?

MORE fruit and vegetable conversations during WIC visits

Simple conversations can be very effective ways to reinforce the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables for WIC families. Even if you don't have time for a detailed nutrition discussion, you probably have time for a more casual, shorter discussion of fruits and vegetables. Here are a few easy ways to get the conversation started:

- *We are checking in this month to see how folks are using their WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit? What did you buy last month?*
- *I found some great fruit bargains at the store this week. What has your family been enjoying from the produce department?*
- *I'm really looking forward to farmer's market this week. Has your family been yet this summer?*
- *Last week at farmers' market, I bought some _____ and we prepared it by _____. Have you been buying anything at farmers' market?*
- *Last week at farmers' market, I bought some _____ and we prepared it by _____. What have you been buying at farmers' market?*
- *Last night for dinner, I served some _____. I wasn't sure how the kids were going to like it, but they loved it. Have you ever had that experience?*
- *My children used to love to help me in the kitchen by _____. What do you do to get the chance to cook with your kids?*
- *Our garden is really going great guns this summer. Right now, I have some delicious _____. Does anyone in your family have garden this year?*
- *We're trying to gather some ideas on how to serve _____. What helpful hints would you like to add to our list?*
- *I just love this time of year when the _____ are in season? What fruits or vegetables has your family been enjoying recently?*

MORE fruit and vegetable handouts and recipes

As part of this project, 12 sets of materials have been created specially for the Montana WIC Program. They are designed to make it as easy as possible for you to promote the WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit in your site.

The table on the next page summarizes the content of each of the sets, with four pages:

Page 1 - Newsletter (a page of basic information for families)

Pages 2 and 3 - Fruit Information and Vegetable Information (a page each of quick tips on choosing, storing, and preparing produce items)

Page 4 - Recipe or Activity about one of the produce items feature in the set

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None of these materials reference any specific month of the year. However, they are arranged in order roughly from January through December – in terms of fruits and vegetables that tend to be in season or less expensive during those months. You may feel free to use them any time that is appropriate for your participants and the needs of your promotions.

Newsletter	Fruit Info	Vegetable Info	Recipe or Activity
Enjoying a rainbow of fruits and vegetables	Apples	Beets	Apple Fun with Kids
Raising kids who love to eat their vegetables	Citrus fruit	Broccoli, broccolini, cauliflower, etc.	Broccoli and Red Pepper Stir-Fry
Easy ways to get kids involved in cooking	Bananas	Carrots	Songs about Bananas (and Apples)
Growing a simple family garden	Strawberries and raspberries	Peas and snap peas	Put on A Pea Tasting Party
Delicious ways to serve leafy greens	Cherries	Spinach and other leafy greens	Keeping Fresh Produce Safe to Eat
Shopping smart at farmers' market	Grapes	Green beans	Counting Games with Grapes
Helping kids eat more fruits and vegetables	Melons	Tomatoes	Ten Terrific Tomato Tricks
Preparing vegetables with maximum flavor	Apricots, peaches, plums, and nectarines	Summer squash	Zesty Zucchini and Tomatoes
Putting fruits and vegetables on menu	Blueberries and huckleberries	Bell peppers	Oatmeal Blueberry Muffins
Teachable moments with fruits and vegetables	Kiwifruit	Cabbage	Kiwi Salad with Yogurt Dressing
Maximize your health with fruits and vegetables	Pears	Winter squash	Singing about Fruits and Vegetables
Fresh fruits and vegetables on a budget	Pineapple	Sweet potato	Sweet Potatoes with Maple Syrup

MORE fruit and vegetable things throughout the WIC office

Decorate your WIC clinic to be fresh produce-friendly – it's bound to be bright, colorful, and inviting that way! Here are a few of the ways you can showcase fresh fruits and vegetables (see the next section for where to find these items):

- A recipe box or binder for participants to look at while waiting
- Children books about fruits and vegetables in the waiting room
- A basket of fruit and vegetable toys for children to play with
- Fruit and vegetable posters on the wall
- A seasonal fruit and vegetable bulletin board
- Fruit and vegetable CDs to play in the clinic

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Resources: **WHERE** to find **MORE** on fruits and vegetables?

The really good news about promoting fruits and vegetables in the Montana WIC Program is that there are thousands of resources to help you! This section lists some of the major sources of reliable, creative fruit and vegetable information.

MORE fruit and vegetable web sites

Today, the Internet is the obvious place to find fruit and vegetable resources at the click of your fingertips. Here are a few of the best to-go resources:

Produce for Better Health (PBH) Foundation:

PBH works with government agencies, as well as growers and processors of produce, to motivate people to eat more fruits and vegetables. PBH has three excellent websites, where you can find a variety of useful resources.

Fruit and Veggie Color Champions™

<http://www.foodchamps.org/>

This is the PBH site for children ages 2 to 8. It offers:

- Online games for 2 to 5 year olds for WIC participants to play with children
- Coloring sheets that you can print for children to use in the office or at home
- Simple fruit and vegetable recipes

Fruits and Veggies More Matters®

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>

The comprehensive site features just about anything that you might want to know about fruits and vegetables, including:

- Vast databases of recipes, along with nutrition, selection, and storage information for a long list of fruits and vegetables
- A growing library of short (2 to 5 minute) online videos about fruits and vegetables, which can be shown to participants on your office computer
- A entire section devoted to getting kids involved in healthy cooking, eating and shopping

PBH Nutrition Education Catalog

<http://www.pbhcatalog.com/>

- The PBH catalog sells a wide variety of reasonably-priced products with the **fruits & veggies more matters®** logo including many items specifically designed for use in WIC programs



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Here are two excellent sites from California and Pennsylvania with a wide variety of fruit and vegetable materials (targeted at low income audiences) that can be downloaded for free.

Harvest of the Month®: Network for a Healthy California

<http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/>

This site is designed for school foodservice managers and nutrition educators in California. For every season of the year, Harvest of the Month offers a bundle of information about several produce items that are grown in California.

- Click on **Download Monthly Elements** and you will see a list (by season) of the fruits and vegetables covered. For each item, there are PDFs (in English and Spanish) of Educator, Family, and Community Newsletters (with recipes) as well as a menu slick for school meals.

Pennsylvania State Nutrition Action Committee (SNAC)

<http://panen.org/s.n.a.c>

This site focuses on vegetables that are grown in Pennsylvania. Materials are provided in English and Spanish for 18 fresh vegetables. Like the California site, this one provides a bundle of materials for each vegetable. Here's what they offer and how you might use the materials:

- **A multi-page newsletter** with tips on selecting, storing, preparing (with simple recipes), and growing a vegetable, such as asparagus or tomatoes. The newsletters (many also in large type) can be used as background for WIC staff or for distributing to WIC participants.
- **Activity Alley** with word games, crosswords, and other activities depending on the vegetable, which can be used at WIC individual appointments and group events.
- **Bookmarks, flyers, brochures, and recipe cards** that can be printed for WIC participants.
- **Bulletin board materials**, once printed these multi-page files with both text and graphics can be assembled to fit in any available space.

WIC Works

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks>

Check out the Topics A-Z such as fruits and vegetables and farmers' market, and the WIC Sharing Center looking for materials developed by various states on fruits and vegetables and farmers' markets. Plus there are lots of other topics and information for WIC, too!

Another source of free online information is the producer promotion boards for fruits and vegetables. The quality of the sites varies, but they do offer recipes and other materials to help you promote a specific item that may be in season or on sale in your local stores. Here are eight examples:

APPLES: Washington Apples

<http://www.bestapples.com/>

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AVOCADOS: California Avocado Commission

<http://www.avocado.org>

CITRUS FRUITS: Sunkist™

<http://www.sunkist.com>

DOLE® (variety of fruits and vegetables)

<http://www.dole.com>

KIWI: California Kiwi Commission

<http://www.kiwifruit.org/>

PEARS: USA Pears

<http://www.usapears.com/>

SWEET POTATOES; Louisiana Sweet Potatoes

<http://www.sweetpotato.org/>

WATERMELON: National Watermelon Promotion Board

<http://www.watermelon.org/>

MORE fruit and vegetable books for children

Books are a fun and effective way to introduce and promote fruits and vegetables to children. Fortunately, because fruits and vegetables are so bright and colorful, they are very popular with people who write children's books as well! There are dozens of picture-only books for babies, storybooks for toddlers, and books that can be used to teach colors and the alphabet. Here are just a few examples of some of the classic fruit and vegetable books:

Anna's Summer Song, by Lena Anderson

The Carrot Seed, by Ruth Krauss

Carlos and the Cornfield (also in Spanish), by Jan Romero Stevens

Caterpillar, Caterpillar, by Vivian French

Compost Critters, by Bianca Lavies

Eating the Alphabet, by Lois Ehlert

From Seed to Plant, by Gail Gibbons

Garden of Happiness, by Erika Tamar

Gregory, the Terrible Eater, by Mitchell Sharmat

Growing Vegetable Soup, by Lois Ehlert

Harriet and the Garden, by Nancy Carlson

It's a Fruit, It's a Vegetable, It's a Pumpkin, by Allan Fowler

Jack's Garden, by Henry Cole

Johnny Appleseed, by Stephen Kellogg

The Market Lady and the Mango Tree, by Pete and Mary Watson

One Good Apple, by Catherine Paladino

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Oats and Wild Apples, by Frank Asch
One Small Square Backyard, by Donald M. Silver
Planting a Rainbow, by Lois Ehlert
Pretend Soup, by Molly Katzen
Stone Soup, by Marcia Brown
Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens

To learn more about options in produce-flavored children's literature, visit your local library, a bookstore, or online catalog (the Neat Solutions catalog in the next section has an extensive list).

Even a small selection of children's books can help you promote more fruits and vegetables in your WIC clinic. Here are three fun ways to use children's books:

- **Have a small basket of books in the waiting room for families to use while they wait for appointments.**
- **Keep a book or two near your desk to distract a fussy child – or to model reading for a parent or other caretaker.**
- **Purchase multiple copies of an inexpensive paperback children's book about fruits and vegetables – and use them as door prizes at a group activity.**

MORE fruit and vegetable materials for WIC offices

Just in case you need a few **more** ideas on where to get fruit and vegetable items for your WIC office or events, here they are:

- **LOCAL BOOK and TEACHER SUPPLY STORES:** You can support local businesses by seeing what fruit and vegetable items they have available – or what they can order for you.
- **SALE TABLES:** Especially in the spring and fall, fruit and vegetable decorations are quite popular. You may be able to pick up bargains in supermarket seasonal gift aisles or on the sales tables of stores like WalMart and Target.
- **DOLLAR STORES:** These can also be a great source of small fruit and vegetable items, such as stickers, toys, baskets, boxes, paper, or napkins for events.
- **THRIFT STORES and YARD SALES:** Check these shopping opportunities for gently used children's books or other items with a fruit and vegetable theme.

There are also several nutrition and health education catalogs that carry fruit and vegetables items. While some of their products are expensive and may not be appropriate for a WIC audience, you might find just what you are looking for at one of these sites:

Food and Health Communications

<http://foodandhealth.com/>

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Learning Zone Express

<http://www.learningzonexpress.com/>

Nasco Nutrition Teaching Aids

<http://www.enasco.com/nutrition/>

National WIC Association Promotional Products

<http://nwaonlinestore.promoshop.com/>

NCES Catalog

<http://www.ncescatalog.com/>

Neat Solutions, Inc.

<http://www.neatsolutions.com/index.html>

Prevention Resources

<http://www.preventionresources.com/>